

20th March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

At school, we understand and appreciate that everyone is very worried about the current situation. We are working hard to support our pupils and our staff, especially in relation to following advice about regular handwashing and social distancing. Following the government's announcement on Wednesday we had communication with many of you regarding keeping our school open to our pupils. This is because all of our pupils have an EHCP and therefore fall into the category of vulnerable groups outlined by the government on Wednesday. Late last night, additional guidance was published that largely focussed on the proposed closure of some schools and the descriptions of key workers.

The guidance clarifies a couple of important points:

'Schools are, therefore, being asked to continue to provide care for a limited number of children - children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are critical to the Covid-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.'

Vulnerable children include children who are supported by social care, those with safeguarding and welfare needs, including child in need plans, on child protection plans, 'looked after' children, young carers, disabled children and those with education, health and care plans'.

A key priority for the government is that those parents/carers who need to continue working as part of the national response to Covid-19 should do so wherever possible.

'The most recent scientific advice on how to further limit the spread of COVID-19 is clear. If children can stay safely at home, they should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading. That is why the government has asked parents to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and asked schools to remain open only for those children who absolutely need to attend.'

In the guidance for parents and carers published yesterday, the government advise that:

*'Many parents working in these critical sectors [Key Workers] may be able to ensure their child is kept at home. **Every child who can be safely cared for at home should be**'.*

In considering this advice, we would ask that you continue to think about what is best for your child. We have previously recognised that some parents will want to keep their child at home, even though they do not have symptoms and no one in the household is self-isolating or social distancing. Our advice continues to be that we are supportive of families who wish to make this decision. If you do wish to withdraw your child from education during this period, we ask that you inform us of this on the first day of absence. We will authorise this absence and provide resources to support learning at home. Where there are particularly high levels of need or we have significant concerns

about a child, we will contact the parent/carer individually to discuss what arrangements can be put in place to support either their attendance at school, or learning at home.

We will require 5 days notice if your child is to return to school. This is needed to give us sufficient time to put arrangements in place in this rapidly changing situation. I am sure everyone will appreciate that our staffing numbers are very likely to continue to fluctuate during this period and as a result, we may not be able to be as flexible as we would ordinarily like. We will try to keep everything as normal and familiar as possible in school.

We are communicating with the Local Authority and Department for Education to ensure that transport arrangements remain in place during this period. School lunches will be provided in school as usual and we will try to ensure that free school meals are provided to eligible pupils even where they are self-isolating or not attending. We will share further details about this as soon as we can.

The government have asked that schools like ours who are remaining open for vulnerable pupils, could continue to operate throughout the Easter holiday wherever possible. We will be planning if and how we could achieve this over the next few days. Ideally we would be able to offer some provision to those that need it the most. We have not yet been able to establish if residential pupils could attend during Easter, but we will inform parents as soon as we are able to.

We will need to ensure staff and pupils continue to follow the guidelines published by Public Health England, so that we can keep everyone as protected as possible. Therefore, if you or your child is self-isolating because you have a dry persistent cough and/or a fever your child will need to stay out of school for the duration of the recommended isolation period.

Where to find the latest information:

Updates on COVID-19:

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

The Department for Education coronavirus helpline:

Phone: 0800 046 8687

Opening hours: 8am to 6pm (Monday to Friday), 10am to 4pm (Saturday to Sunday)

Health guidance:

- If you live alone and you have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19), however mild, stay at home for 7 days from when your symptoms started
- If you live with others and you or another member of the household have symptoms of coronavirus, then all household members must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days. The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill. It is likely that people living within a household will infect each other or be infected already. Staying at home for 14 days will greatly reduce the overall amount of infection the household could pass on to others in the community
- For anyone in the household who starts displaying symptoms, they need to stay at home for 7 days from when the symptoms appeared, regardless of what day they are on in the original 14-day isolation period.

The symptoms are:

- A high temperature (37.8 degrees and above)
- A new, continuous cough

We would like to take a moment to say thank you to our staff, pupils and parents and carers who have shown support and determination throughout this period. Our staff in particular, continue to 'keep calm and carry on' and we are hugely grateful to them for all their efforts so far.

Please note that all the information in this letter is accurate at the time of writing but may be subject to change should further announcements happen. We will write again when there is further information to share with you.

With kind regards

Natalie Edwards

Natalie Edwards
Acting Principal

R Preece

Richard Preece
CEO